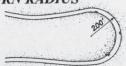
GRADE



The road was designed with a ruling grade generally less than 5% and never exceeding 7%, less than half as steep as the Fall River Road.

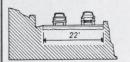
TURN RADIUS



Minimum radii for open curves was 100', and 200' on blind curves. Many curves were designed to sweep across but not dominate, the landscape.

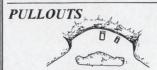
ROAD WIDTH

Unlike the single-track Fall River Road, Trail Ridge Road was designed as a two-lane with a 22' roadbed and 3' ditches in cut sections.



ELEVATION GAIN

The roadway was largely built into the hillside, elevated on rock fill once it reached the tundra. Long continuous curves were used to gain elevation.



The commodious stone-walled turnouts, often located on major curves, provided ample space for visitors to take in the views.

RIDGE ROAD - 1932

Continental Divide

Trail Ridge Road provides spectacular views of the majestic scenery of Rocky Mountain National Park. It is the highest continuous motorway in the United States, with more than eight miles lying above 11,000 and a maximum elevation of 12,183. The name "Trail Ridge Road" derives from its proximity to historic pathways used by native peoples to cross the Rocky Mountains.

Trail Ridge Road was designed to replace the Fall River Road, which proved inadequate for modern motor travel as soon as it opened in 1920. Trail Ridge Road was designed to have more gentle grades, broader curves, and a greater variety of scenic experiences. The sunny, ridge-top location would also reduce snow accumulation and allow Trail Ridge Road to open earlier than its shady, snow-laden predecessor.

Trail Ridge Road was constructed between 1926 and 1932 through the collaborative efforts of the National Park Service and the Bureau of Public Roads (now the Federal Highway Administration). Construction crews had to contend with imposing terrain, harsh weather, short working seasons, and stringent design criteria, which were intended to ensure that the road would "lie lightly on the land," displaying the region's rich scenic diversity with minimal impact on the natural environment. Trail Ridge Road opened in July 1932, providing motorists with access to impressive views, memorable wildlife viewing opportunities, and spectacular high mountain terrain.



The heavy logs atop the Alpine Visitors Center are designed to withstand heavy

snows and keep the roof from blowing away in fierce winter storms where winds can exceed 200 mph.

Kawuneeche Valley (E) On the west side of the park, Trail Ridge Road passes through the Kawuneeche Valley, a region of dense forests,

lush meadows, and winding streams. Several small creeks are bridged with attractive masonry culverts.

Many Parks Curve D

Trail Ridge Road was one of the first places the National Park

Service developed a coordinated system of scenic pullouts designed

to allow motorists to stop and safely view the surrounding scenery.

1960s to improve safety and provide even more impressive views.

The pedestrian walkway at Many Parks Curve was added in the

GRAND LAKE ENTRANCE STATI



Tundra Curves and Lava Cliffs (B) The graceful Tundra Curves are one of the most photographed features of Trail Ridge Road.

Fall River Road

ENTRANCE STATION

Rock Cut

Trail Ridge Road designers sought to showcase this unusual rock formation - an intrusion of igneous rock that rises above the bare alpine tundra. The looming rocks produce a memorable motoring experience that contrasts with the open tundra environment.